

The What? So What? and Now What? of School Exclusion



Create the Change III: Moving Beyond Hope to Action

Amway Grand Hotel, Grand Rapids

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Key Questions...

“What?” “So what?” and “Now What?”

1. **What** are school exclusionary practices?
2. **So what?** What is the impact of these practices on school climate, behavior, and learning?
3. **Now what?** What are some research-based strategies to address discipline problems in a way that will reduce exclusionary practices while promoting a positive school climate, prosocial behavior, and both learning?

Guidelines for Success!



- Turn off anything that rings, dings, or sings.
- Be mindful of people around you.
- It's okay to enjoy ourselves along the way!
- Keep an open mind and **Participate**



Key Questions...

1. **What** are school exclusionary practices?

School Exclusionary Practices

- Out-of-School Suspension
- Expulsion
- Zero Tolerance



Key Question...

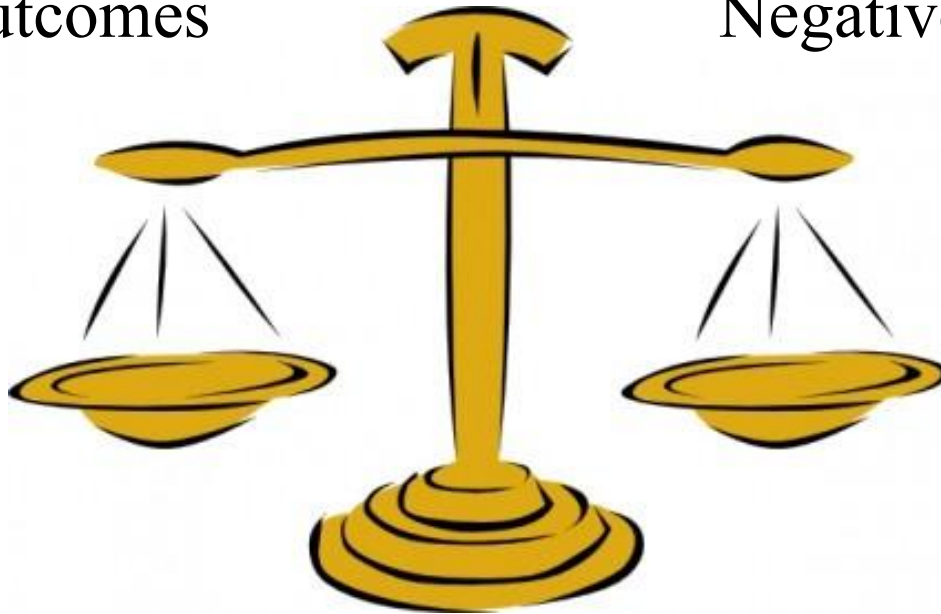
2. So what?

What is the impact of these practices on school climate, behavior, learning?

School Exclusion: Suspension and Expulsion

Strengths
Positive Outcomes

Weaknesses
Negative Outcomes



Zero Tolerance in Michigan...



- In 1995, as Michigan's zero tolerance policy was enacted, only about 240 students were expelled.
- In 2001-2002, 1,588 expulsions were reported—and these expulsions occurred throughout the state.

The Student Advocacy Center of Michigan, 2003

Michigan has developed one of the harshest school discipline codes in the country.

The Student Advocacy Center of Michigan, 2003

CHAOS



"Well, Timmy, it looks like you've just earned yourself 10 minutes in the cage with Mr. Whiskers."



According to the Michigan Public Policy Initiative Report (2003), many Michigan students are expelled for behaviors that once would have been considered nothing more than adolescent antics or poor judgment.

Who gets suspended and expelled in Michigan?



- Youth of color are also more likely to be disciplined for minor offenses—with no evidence that they misbehave at a significantly higher rate.

(The Civil Rights Project, 2006)

- Youth of color are disproportionately suspended and expelled, with Black students are suspended at a rate of 22.1% compared to White students who are suspended at a rate of 9.6%.

(The Civil Rights Project, 2012)



- Michigan is among the top ten states in the country for high rates of suspending students with disabilities (15.4%)—with Black students having disabilities being suspended at a rate of 26.8%.

(Student Advocacy Center of Michigan, 2002)

- Younger students are more likely to be expelled, with middle school students (grades 6-9) being expelled at higher rates than any other age group during the 1999-2000 school year.

(Student Advocacy Center of Michigan, 2002)



The School-to-Prison Pipeline

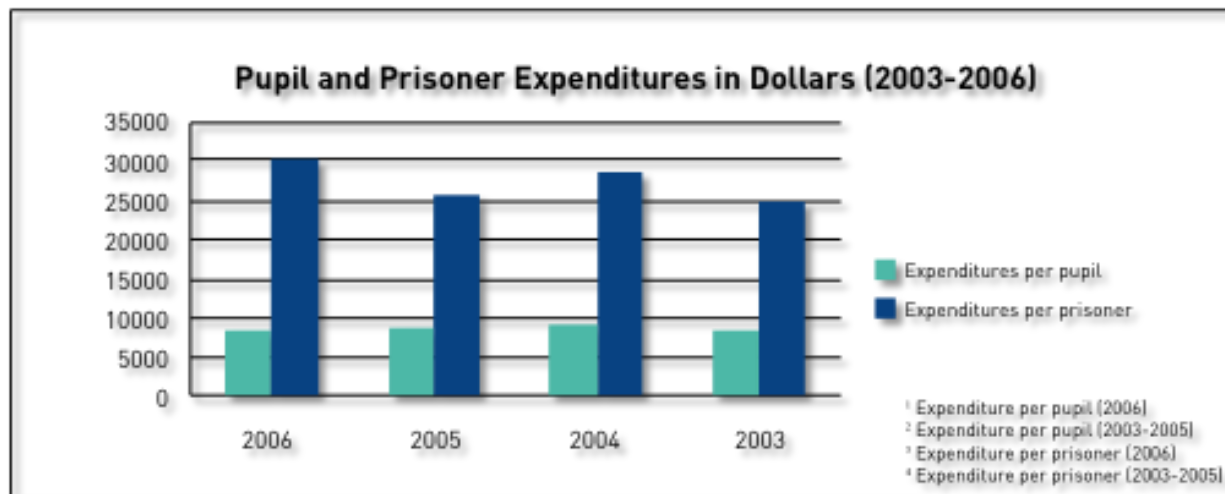
Schools *directly* push students into the criminal justice system through zero tolerance policies that involve police for minor incidents—and *indirectly* by excluding them from school through suspension and expulsion.

Many students who have been suspended long-term or expelled have no alternative opportunities for learning or other productive activities. “Without these provisions, it is probable that the expelled student would eventually be involved in criminal activity, posing a threat to society and a major cost burden to taxpayers.”

Michigan Rep. Gregory Pitoniak

- 82% of America's prisoners are high school dropouts.
- There was a 187% increase in the prison population from 1985 (17,744) to 2008 (50,952), while the general population increased by only 10%.
- There was a 576% increase in adult corrections costs in Michigan from 1985 to 2008 (\$305 million to \$2 billion, adjusted for inflation).

(NASBO, 2008)



(ACLU of Michigan, 2009)

The Bottom Line about Suspension and Expulsion...

“There is no evidence that zero tolerance [out-of-school suspension and expulsion] makes a contribution to school safety or improved student behavior. Rather, higher levels of out-of-school suspension and expulsion are related to less adequate school climate, lower levels of achievement at the school level, a higher probability of future student misbehavior, and eventually lower levels of school completion.

Suspension and expulsion should be reserved “for the most serious and severe of infractions.”



Neurology Comes to School:

Understanding the Brain for More Effective Discipline

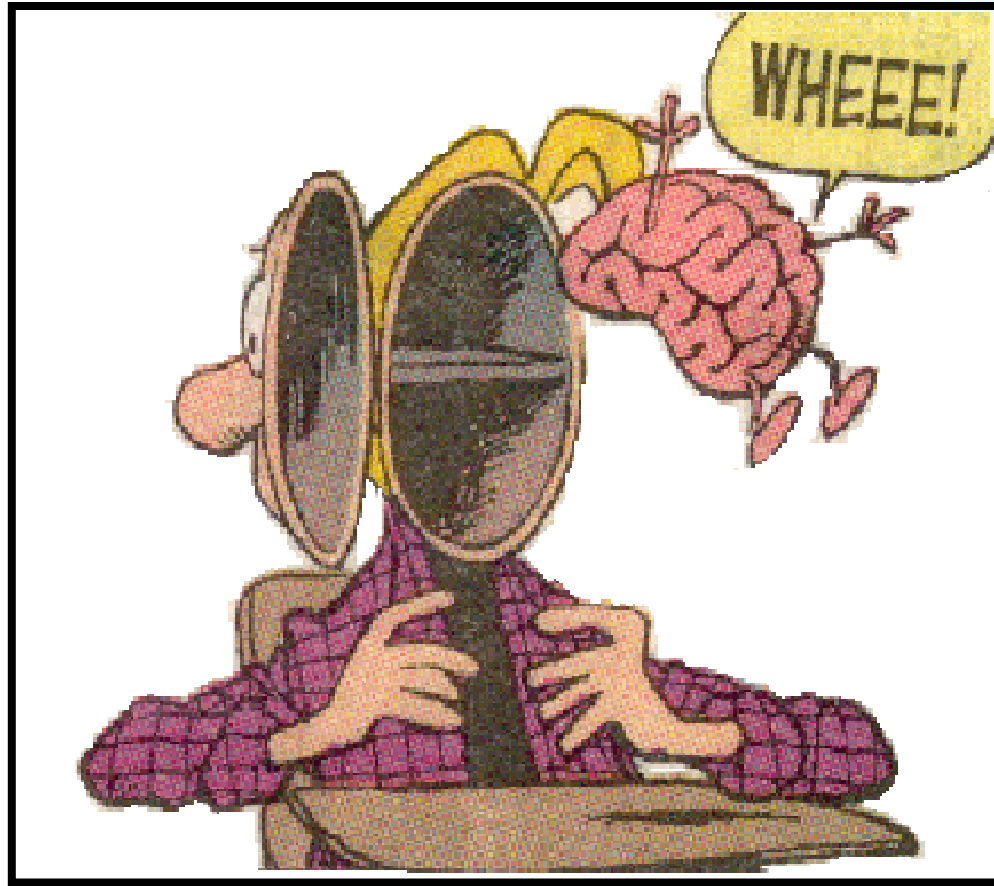
1. The adolescent brain is “under construction.”

Picture an adolescent in your mind...

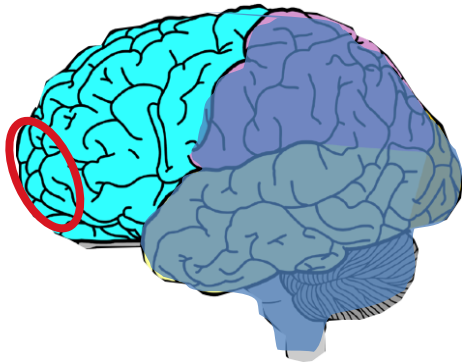


What are some of the hallmark characteristics of an adolescent?

The Adolescent Brain

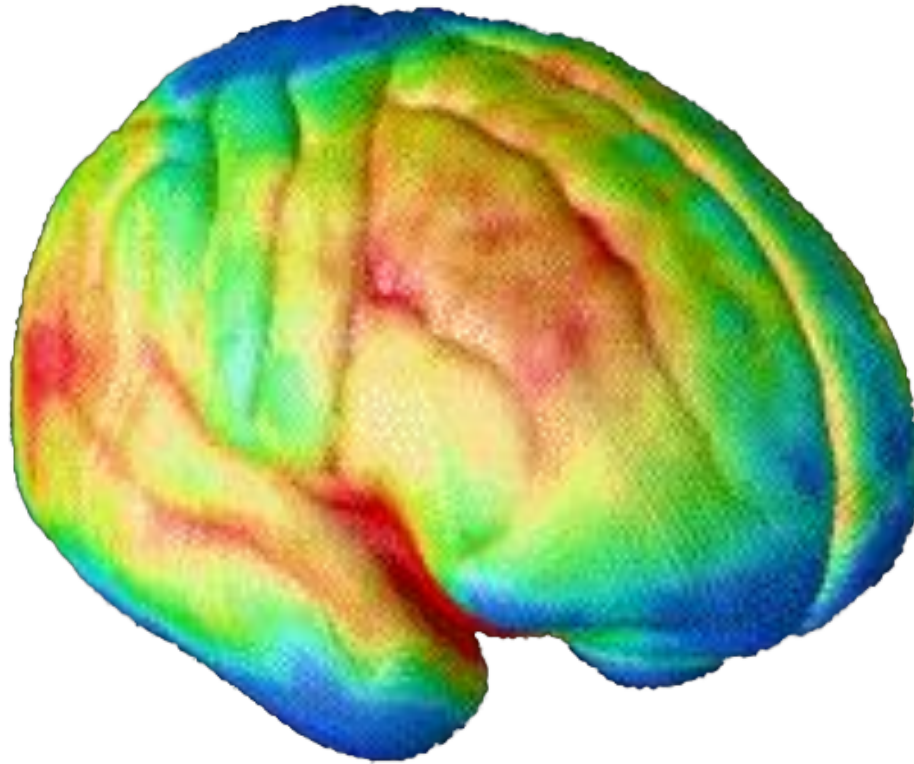


Frontal Lobes: CEO of the Brain



- Future orientation
- Planning, organizing multiple tasks
- Foreseeing consequences
- Sound judgment
- Goal and priority setting
- Emotional control/Impulse inhibition
- Decision-making
- Abstract thinking, logical reasoning
- Expressive speech
- Delayed gratification
- Cause and effect relationships

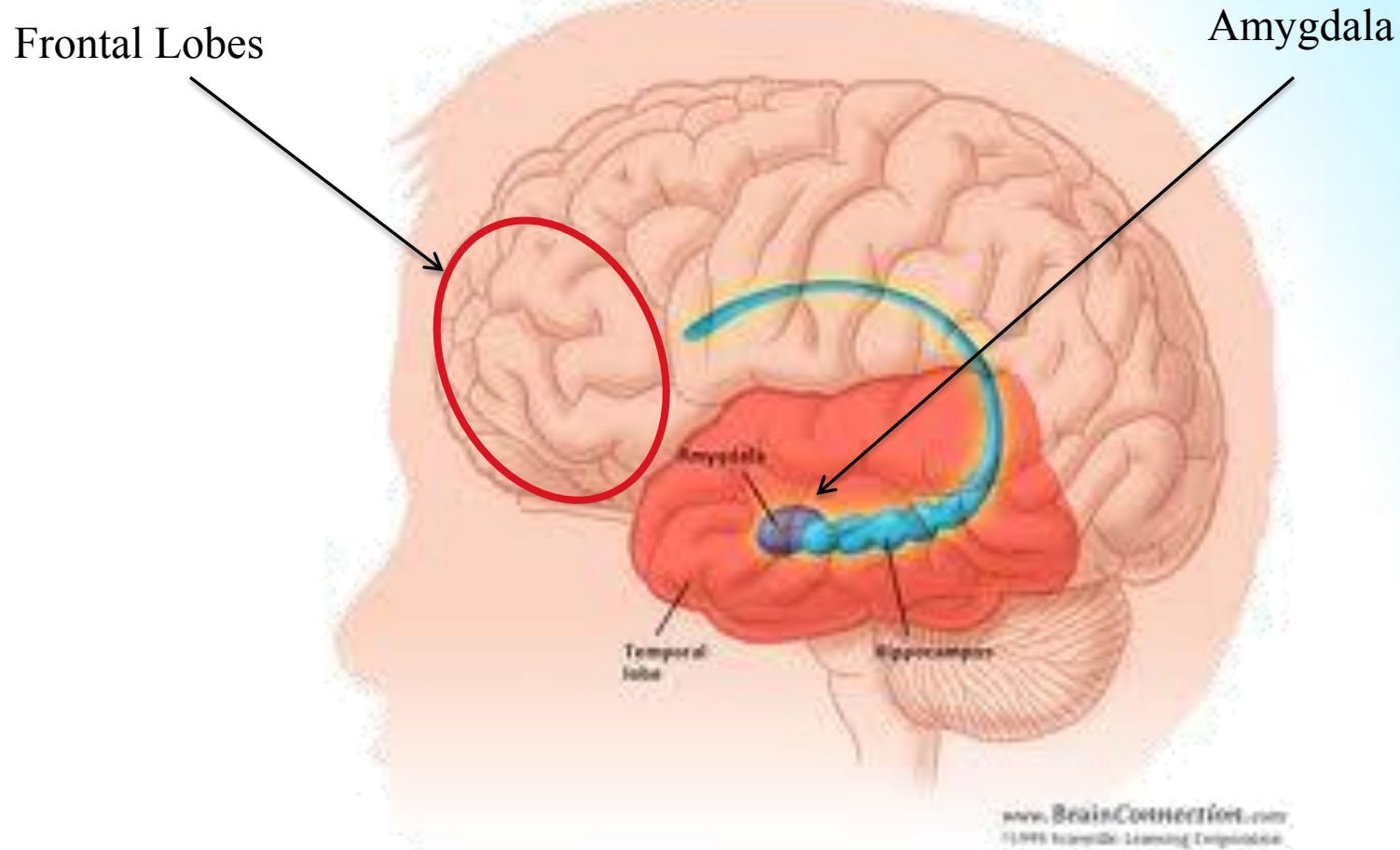
Brain Development in Healthy Youth (Ages 5 – 20)



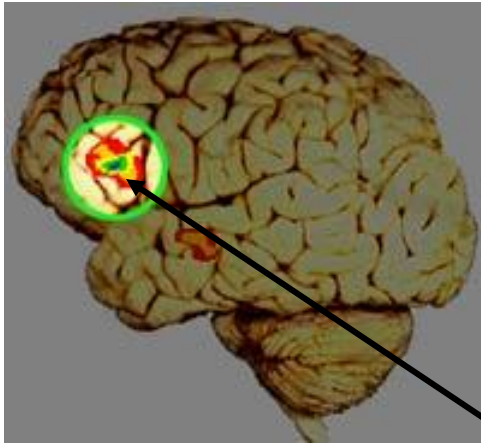
Maturation occurs from back to front of the brain.

Source: Gogtay, Giedd, et al., 2004.

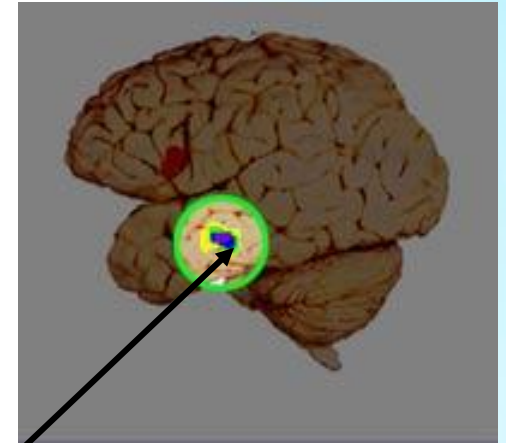
Frontal Lobes: The Brain's Pause Button



What is the emotion?



Prefrontal Cortex



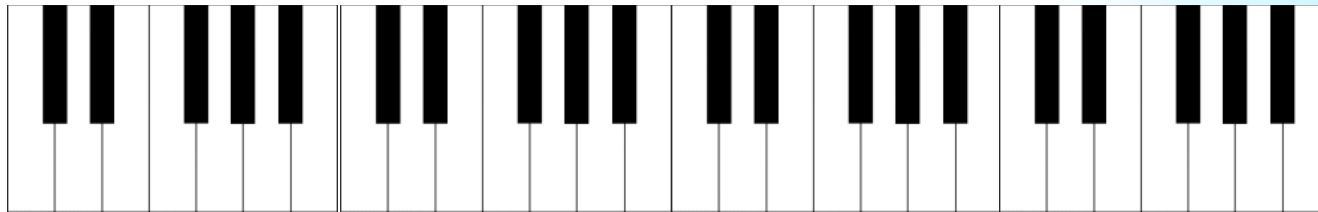
Amygdala



Adolescents have a fully-developed “emotional” amygdala and immature “reasoning” frontal lobes and.

Discipline to Promote Social/Emotional Learning

Some emotions are hardwired—others must be learned:



Hardwired Emotions	Learned Emotions that Must Be Taught	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sadness• Joy• Disgust• Anger• Surprise• Fear	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Empathy• Compassion• Humility• Optimism• Forgiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sympathy• Cooperation• Patience• Gratitude• Shame

Every emotional response you *don't* see in a student is one you need to be *teaching*.

Paraphrased from Eric Jensen, 2009



Neurology Comes to School:

Understanding the Brain for More Effective Discipline

1. The adolescent brain is “under construction.”
2. The brain has a number of social/emotional biological imperatives.

The Brain’s Social/Emotional Biological Imperatives and Implications for Discipline

Safety: Feeling physically and emotionally safe	Treat students with respect with your words and actions.
Belonging/Connectedness: Caring relationships in a supportive community where your contributions and potential are valued	Develop positive relationships with students before a disciplinary action is required. Let students know you care about them and they are valued members of the school community.



Neurology Comes to School: The Brain's Response to Pain



The anterior cingulate gyrus registers pain.

The Brain's Social/Emotional Biological Imperatives and Implications for Discipline

Safety: Feeling physically and emotionally safe	Treat students with respect with your words and actions.
Belonging/Connectedness: Caring relationships in a supportive community where your contributions and potential are valued	Develop positive relationships with students before a disciplinary action is required. Let students know you care about them and they are valued members of the school community.
Predictability: Ability to predict patterns and outcomes	Use a consistent and predictable discipline system of graduated consequences that begin with mild consequences and escalate in severity based upon potential for harm.
Autonomy/Self-Efficacy: Ability to exert control over outcomes in your life	Avoid power struggles by not engaging in confrontational or manipulative behaviors (e.g., yelling, threatening, coercing, intimidating, demeaning, sarcasm, finger wagging)
Fairness: Being treated without bias or injustice	Apply similar consequences for similar behaviors without modifications up or down based upon students' history of behavior or special status.
Learning: Increasing competence and mastery	Facilitate learning into the disciplinary process so the student can develop more effective skills and strategies to achieve goals and solve problems.

Why *Teach* Behavioral Self-Management?

When a child does not know how to read...



When a child does not know how to swim...



When a child does not know how to behave...



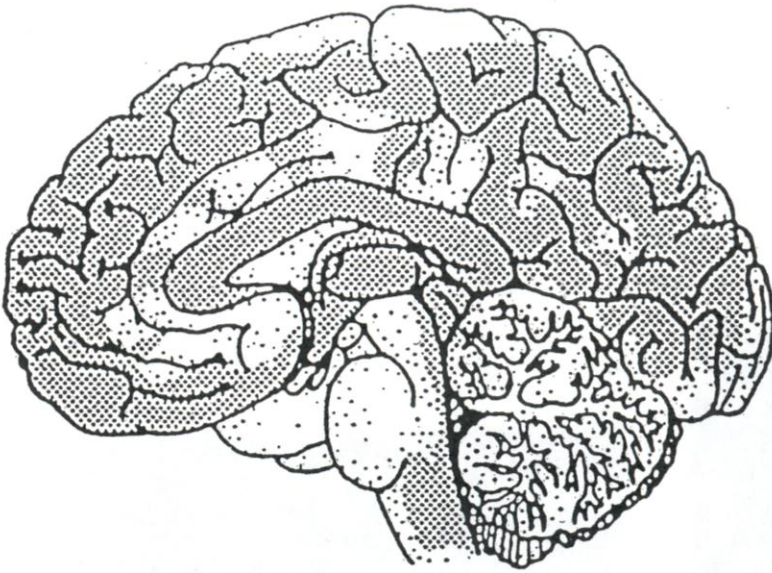


Neuroscience Comes to School

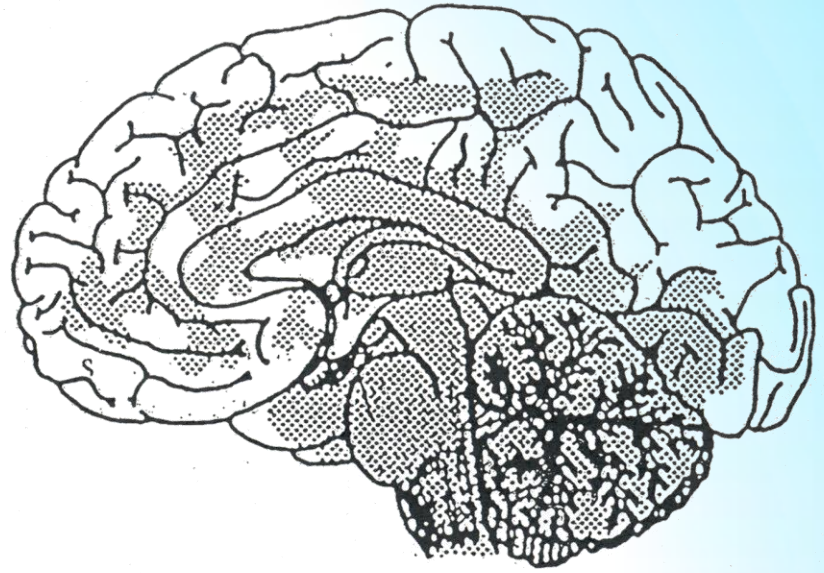
The intelligence and functioning ability of the brain is *not* fixed at birth.

- The brain changes physiologically as a result of experience.
- The environment in which the brain operates determines to a large degree the ability of that brain, including how the genes work.
- The brain is strongly influenced by emotion. Some emotions can enhance learning, others can shut it down.

The Brain's Threat Response



Engaged
with a Challenge



Minimization
Neural Hijacking



Neural Plasticity

The brain learns something from everything it experiences –
–and it sculpts itself based upon those experiences...



- Genes can be turned on, *or not*, based upon what it experiences in its the environment.
- Neural connections and pathways can be created, *or not*, based upon what it experiences in its the environment.
- Skills and capacities can be developed, *or not*, based upon what it experiences in its the environment.

If a student's brain is learning from everything it experiences—everything we say and do—what is a student “learning” —and “*not* learning”—from being put out of school?

The Bottom Line about Discipline and the Brain...

1. Understanding the adolescent brain development can help us depersonalize difficult behavior that might otherwise be perceived as a personal attack or challenge.
2. Understanding the brain's social/emotional imperatives helps us better meet their needs while disciplining.
3. Understanding how the brain learns and sculpts itself in response to what it experiences can help us create a disciplinary process that promotes healthy social/emotional development.

Something to keep in mind...

Being put out of school can only work as a deterrent if students *want* to be in school.





Key Question...

3. **Now what?** Based upon what we have been learned from research, what can schools do to address discipline problems in a way that will reduce exclusionary practices while promoting a positive school climate, prosocial behavior, and learning—academic and social/emotional?

Successful alternatives do exist to school exclusion and harsh, unforgiving policies. In some cases, school officials can give students another chance and despite their mistakes, allow them to stay in school, learn from the incidents and ultimately, become productive members of the school community.

The Student Advocacy Center of Michigan, 2003

Recommendations

1. Reserve suspension and expulsion for the most serious and severe of infractions.
2. Use a graduated system of discipline with consequences that are commensurate to the seriousness of the infraction.
3. Implement research-supported prevention strategies to enhance school climate and increase connectedness (e.g., bullying prevention and social/emotional learning).
4. Implement intervention strategies that are designed to *teach* offending students prosocial strategies to solve problems and achieve goals.

Recommendations

5. Provide clear definitions of all behaviors to be reported to ensure consistency and fairness.
6. Include effective alternatives to suspension in the disciplinary system (e.g., in-school suspension, after-school detention, Saturday school, classes only, restorative conferences, alternative school, parent conferences) that do not deprive students of core content classes.
7. Provide opportunities for students to be actively engaged in strategies to create a safer and more supportive school.
8. Improve communication and collaboration among schools, parents, mental health providers, and juvenile justice system professionals.

Recommendations

5. Utilize data to assess effectiveness of all strategies, programs, and curricula designed to promote school safety. Disaggregate discipline data by race and gender to ensure there is no disproportionate application of suspension or expulsion..

We need to give kids a “way back”....



Suspending students out of school means schools pass up the “teachable moment” when they can connect with students, build relationships, and communicate that they belong in school.

*Education Week
In-School Suspension: A Learning Tool*

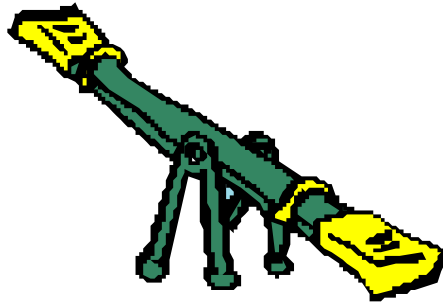
Never underestimate the power of a caring, supportive relationships and a respectful discipline system designed to teach and support positive behavioral change.

Recommendations to Reduce Suspensions and Expulsions Utilizing S3 Grant Components

The following recommendations have emerged from decades of research as effective strategies to reduce suspensions and expulsions while promoting student safety, academic achievement, social emotional learning, and healthy youth development. Check marks indicate which S3 grant components include strategies that *directly* address each of the specific recommendations. Other components may indirectly address recommendations, and all of the components contribute to a more positive school environment and connectedness. When all the components are implemented together as part of an integrated, systems approach, they will be mutually supportive and will increase the overall effectiveness of a school's effort to create a safe and supportive learning environment.

Recommendation	S3 Component					
	Bully-Free Schools (BFS)	Restorative Justice	Michigan Model for Health	Parenting	Removing Barriers	Sexual Minority Youth
1. Reserve suspension and expulsion for the most serious and severe of infractions.	√	√				
2. Use a graduated system of discipline with consequences that are commensurate to the seriousness of the infractions.	√					
3. Implement research-supported prevention strategies designed to enhance school climate and increase connectedness, such as bullying prevention and social/emotional learning.	√	√				
4. Implement intervention strategies that are designed to <i>teach</i> offending students prosocial strategies to solve problems and achieve goals.	√	√	√			
5. Provide clear definitions of all behaviors (both major and minor) to be reported to ensure consistency and fairness.	√					
6. Include effective alternatives to suspension in the disciplinary system (e.g., in-school suspension, after-school detention, Saturday school, classes only, restorative conferences, alternative school, parent conferences) that do not deprive students of core content classes.	√	√				
7. Provide opportunities for students to be actively engaged in strategies to create a safer and more supportive school.	√		√			
8. Improve communication and collaboration among schools, parents, mental health providers, and juvenile justice system professionals.	√		√			
9. Utilize data to assess effectiveness of all strategies, programs, and curricula designed to promote school safety. Disaggregate discipline data by race and gender to ensure there are no disproportionate application of suspension or expulsion.	√					

The question is not,
"Will I make a difference?"



The question is...
"What kind of difference will I make?"

What is your first Next Step?



Contact Information for Technical Support

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 - Bully-Free Schools: Circle of Support for Learning
 - Adolescent Brain: Time of Danger & Opportunity
 - Teaching with the Brain in Mind

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